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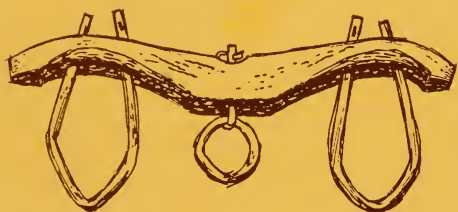
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Lincoln in Excelsis, The
Double Climax, Gettysburg
and the Second Inaugural

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LINCOLN IN EXCELSIS



The Double Climax—

Gettysburg
and the
Second Inaugural



By

EMANUEL HERTZ



"Be You Abe Lincoln?"

LINCOLN IN EXCELSIS



The Double Climax—

Gettysburg
and the
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LINCOLN IN EXCELSIS

THE DOUBLE CLIMAX—GETTYSBURG AND THE SECOND INAUGURAL

By EMANUEL HERTZ

It is given to but few to obtain a glimpse of the infinite or an intimation of the Divine. Occasionally a mortal speaks to his Maker and asks in humility: "Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory," and the request, in view of the petitioner's great service to his people and to succeeding generations, is partly granted. Two or three such mortals beheld in one form or another the manifestation of the Divine Presence, and their names, as a consequence, became impressed upon the records of the millenia, so that no power, short of the infinite, can erase them. As long as the world endures they will remain beacon lights in the lives of the succeeding generations. Their names are a household word, their achievements ingrained in the warp and woof of the eternal story of man's yearnings and strivings for the ideal which, when attained, will usher in the inauguration of the Messianic Age.

Moses steps down from Sinai and transmits to six hundred thousand liberated slaves and their families a Decalogue which makes them free, and four thousand years after we are still ruled by the formula he then ordained and proclaimed in tones of thunder and with the background of a flaming Sinai.

Four thousand years later, almost in as many words, Abraham Lincoln steps to the edge of a platform at Gettysburg against the background of a devastating Civil War, and repeats another formula received in almost the same hushed reverence by a stunned multitude, and thus transmits a rule of life and principle of government by which we can live another four thousand years. The two pronouncements, the one Divine and the other prophetic, are so near alike that they have been

grouped in importance to the race as almost one—certainly one complementing and supplementing the other. And within a short period thereafter, the prophetic spokesman, who seemed destined to defeat if the sycophants and the soothsayers were to have their way, was again chosen by an overwhelming mandate of those who hailed him in nation-wide acclaim and those others—his soldiers—from a battle-front of a thousand miles, “*moriturus te salutem*,” ascended the rostrum in the Capitol and pronounced the benediction upon the great deliverance of his people from the Moloch of slavery, which he had ground to dust and cast to the four winds of heaven; in his Second Inaugural he simply re-enforced and amplified the message of the ages to which he gave utterance at Gettysburg.

It is given to few of the ordinary mortals who break through the ranks of the millions who appear and disappear in this our earthly caravan, to be heard once and be remembered by a single utterance, such as Luther’s at Worms, Galileo’s at Rome, Patrick Henry’s at Richmond, Jefferson reading the Declaration, Emile Zola’s *J’Accuse*—to a moribund and corrupt government; but to be heard on two occasions, both of which can never be forgotten, has been given to no human being save one or two in hoary antiquity. Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg, without the authority and might of tongue of the chosen orator of the day; his words were so plain that all understood; his ideas so lofty that a whole world paused and heeded what he said, and though he had but few of the accepted arts of the rhetorician, he gave worthy utterance to the feelings of the Nation. The man was infinitely greater than the orator.

Lincoln spoke the Second Inaugural, and an entire world became convinced that his second message, supplementing the first at Gettysburg, could never be forgotten. The *British Standard*, a leading English journal, not a bit friendly at the time to Lincoln, said of it: “It is the most remarkable thing of the sort ever pronounced by any President of the United States, from the first day until now. Its Alpha and its Omega is *Almighty God*, the God of Justice and the Father of Mercies, who is working out the purpose of his love. It is invested with a

dignity and pathos which lift it high above every thing of the kind, whether in the Old World or the New. The whole thing puts us in mind of the best men of the English Commonwealth; there is, in fact, much of the old prophet in it." His stage was now the civilized world, the screen against which those strange features became silhouetted was the entire landscape, bounded only by the American continent from coast to coast, and from the earth to the sky, and his message reached every fireside. His words rose to a high level of dignity and majesty of utterance, and he never descended from that high level. Father Abraham—his features, his message, his life work—became the heritage of every humble home in the entire civilized world; the prophetic words of his War Secretary were even then beginning to be fulfilled; even now as his days on earth were drawing to a close. Indeed, he belongs to the ages, he was intended for the ages, he was sent as a messenger even as were his prototypes in recorded history, and when he uttered the classic, imperishable words on both occasions, at Gettysburg and at the Second Inaugural, he removed the last vestige of doubt that he, and he alone, was chosen to make men free, to make the Union endure and to trace the chart by which America was to continue if it were to endure, if it were to fulfill and live its destiny. And after he spoke, the act was closed.

The rest followed as an inevitable result of his plans, of his wishes, of his dictates: "Love the stranger within thy gates." "Give every child an even chance." "Plant a rose where a thistle grew." "Maintain the government of the people." "Yield respect for law." "Trust in God, for His judgments are righteous altogether, and remain at peace with all the world." These were the mainsprings of that great soul, sent to make us free, and to inaugurate a government of the people which should not perish from the earth.

This element, which sets Lincoln apart, is not entirely absent in some of his other deeds and in many of his utterances, even aside from the three major occasions, for it appeared whenever the noble wrath was aroused, ever and anon. Now at Bloom-

ington, now at Alton in his great debate, now at Cooper Union, now in the First Inaugural or just a few days before in Independence Hall at Philadelphia—that speech was the key to the unselfish and pathetic self-abnegation of his pure and lofty life—and ever and again in his letters written as though his pen were dipped in his own heart's blood, to Ellsworth's parents, to Henry Clay's son, and then when someone without vision assailed his course, dictated by the one passion of his life, the security of the Union under God.

But these embers occasionally ignited, and flickering with the eternal light, blazed into full glory on but few occasions, and these were at Gettysburg, in the Cabinet Room in September the year before when he read his Emancipation Proclamation, and for the last time when he again cheerfully assumed the burdens of healing the Nation's wounds and reconciling the estranged members of his national family.

Never was he more superhuman than when aroused by a sneer or a doubting remark as to his sincerity or the justice of his mission and the ultimate success of his cause. Sickles, the irreverent and skeptic general, who was wounded at Gettysburg, drew an electric flash of his just anger when he queried of Lincoln as to what he was doing when the fate of the Nation was at stake, and when he—Sickles—and others were fighting for its life. The manner, not the content of the question, seemed to have aroused Lincoln, and out flashed the divine spark in him. The general relates the story himself and what he heard when Lincoln's reply came, as calm and clear, as elemental and inevitable as some of his other great utterances. Sickles could not hold it to himself but told all, and so it comes to us vouched for by General Rusling and others, and we need not be concerned with the doubts cast upon it, as is the case with so many other extraordinary incidents in his career.

A little over a year before he had submitted to his Cabinet the draft of the Emancipation which was to take effect on the first of the year—January 1, 1863—and which was to crown his life's work with the realization of what he had been

indirectly aiming for, and upon that he invoked the consideration of his fellowmen and the blessings of Almighty God. That act was the first step to immortality. That noble spirit was now released, emancipated and ready for higher flights. Those around him noticed no change in him. It took time before they became conscious of the change. But Gettysburg was notice to the whole world that the Lincoln of Springfield, the political leader, the advocate, the Congressman, the oft-disappointed candidate, the editor and the debater, had at last blossomed out and reached such heights in the affairs of men, that henceforth his influence would not, and could not, be measured by ordinary standards. Had he not spoken to his Cabinet as he did, had he not spoken at Gettysburg, had he not delivered the Second Inaugural, his influence, his mark upon the times, would have been akin to that of his contemporaries. A decade or two, and he would have occupied a niche in the gallery of chief executives like those occupied by most of his predecessors. But these three events in his career raised him on high and above all others, not only of his own day but of those of his predecessors into an atmosphere where only two or three kindred spirits dwell—Paine, Jefferson, Marshall and Washington; and he, like Abou Ben Adhem, leads all the rest.

How fortunate that he was given no opportunity for lengthy preparation; that Everett, the unanimous choice of the Eighteen Governors, was chosen; and that Everett, and not he, condensed the history and the lessons of all civil wars into a two hour oration; that Lincoln was taken, so to say, unaware, and that his message came unalloyed with figures of speech, statistics and quotations, unencumbered with recommendations and earthly transactions, or recitals of ephemeral events, which were even then plaguing the ordinary man, but that he was informed that he was expected to say a few words as President after the "great" utterance of the day shall have been pronounced by the "foremost" orator of the day—Governor, Senator, Secretary of State, President of Harvard, the learned son of Massachusetts, the best representative of Harvard's distinguished Alumni. Lincoln was just to say something to indicate that the Federal

Government was represented on the spot, and that the government in Washington still functioned. And so, plagued and pestered and interrupted by political leaders, by his own entourage, engaged in conversation by Seward, entertained by Ward Lamon and conversing with his secretaries, and by the others who came with him, he retreated into his own soul, and while all around him was confusion, he formulated in his mind the words which had been uppermost in his heart and soul for twenty years, and soon to be uttered as the benediction of the ages, upon the sacrificial victims of the young Republic, brought upon the altar of their country on a spot where Providence decided that this, our government, should continue to go from strength to strength. Everett—the scholar, the orator, the student of Demosthenes, of Cicero, of Chatham, of Burke and of Webster—digested and condensed all the famous passages of classic lore of two thousand years into two hours of mortal eloquence, in itself a most admirable performance. Lincoln uttered the yearnings of the ages in three minutes of spoken words, perfectly arrayed, and which came from the purest heart that was ever called upon to guide the destinies of a distracted people. He stood there—the legate of eternity—to sanctify those who had gone to their eternal reward, to deny the claims of the tyrant who had, until that day, played so sinister a part in the annals of his country's history.

From the field of Gettysburg, where he sent forth this first message, it was but a step to the Second Inaugural, which was received with awe and reverence, and was so soon followed by his ascension to glory.

Opinions on these three State papers are numerous, comments without number are continually added, quotations in their entirety as well as some of portions of these documents have become woven into our comments upon our national aims and purposes. How, and when, it came to be written has been given to us by practically every man who sat on that never-to-be-forgotten platform, as well as by his host, David Wills, with whom he remained over night. How the eight versions, all the same in their great purpose, with but slight changes in the

wording, have all been accounted for, the reports of how the man of God appeared and delivered his message, and they about him knew it not, and had to be told by a distant editor and by the press on hostile soil, that a great message was contained in those two hundred and sixty-seven words, are matters of history.

Then those who heard it began to consult the newspapers which contained the report; but not for many years thereafter was the message at Gettysburg recognized and admitted to its proper place among the few great utterances cherished by mankind.

And then came the young men who heard it, and who had turned gray in the service of their country, and began to tell what they knew of the address which they had the privilege of hearing, and after the stretch of time no two of them remembered the same thing.

Hay and Seward, Carr and Stanton, Nicolay and Everett himself—tell all they know of how the modest man stepped forward and with the sheets in hand told those present what the occasion meant for those who fell and for those living and for those of future days, who would follow and carry on and live by the message of the Union.

Many have sat in judgment over these inspired utterances, and some would have us believe that Lincoln actually collected every word and phrase from the days of Cleon, the tanner of the age of Pericles down to Lamartine of France and Theodore Parker, Lewis Cass, Daniel Webster, Robert Toombs, Joel Parker, Henry Wilson, George Thompson and James Monroe—among whose utterances some collection of words, some phrase, they say, may or might have been the source of Lincoln's inspiration. In order to show them all, they have been collected in order to demonstrate how unfounded and improbable a charge of this kind seems to us today, who can view the utterances of Lincoln as a whole, and recognize in this, as in others, the honest mind and heart of the spokesman of his embattled people at Gettysburg.

Says DANIEL WEBSTER, in his reply to Hayne: "It is, Sir, the people's Constitution, the people's government, made

for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." If Marshall is the greatest Chief Justice, if Washington the greatest of the Fathers and Founders, Daniel Webster is the foremost Senator and defender of the Constitution, and came as near to the core of the idea as anyone, excepting only Lincoln, his one superior in far-sightedness and political vision.

THEODORE PARKER, in a speech made in Boston, on May 29, 1850, said: "This is what I call the American idea * * * * The idea that all men have unalienable rights; that in respect thereof, all men are created equal; and that government is to be established and sustained for the purpose of giving every man an opportunity for the enjoyment and development of all those unalienable rights. This idea demands, as the proximate organization thereof, a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people; of course, a government after the principles of eternal justice, the unchanging law of God; for shortness sake, I will call it the idea of freedom."

And in another speech delivered in Boston on May 31, 1854, THEODORE PARKER expressed the same thought in somewhat different language, as follows: "First there is the democratic idea; that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain natural rights; that these rights are alienable only by the possessor thereof; that they are equal in all men; that government is to organize these natural unalienable and equal rights into institutions designed for the good of the governed; and therefore government is to be of all the people, by all the people, and for all the people. Here government is development, not exploitation."

In his address on THE FORM OF NOTICE TO THE TOWN OF BERLIN, delivered on Monday, May 16, 1853, JUDGE JOEL PARKER gave utterance to the principle of "government of the people, for the people and by the people." I quote: " * * * * It is a matter of some importance, in reference to this and other subjects upon which this Convention may act, that we should inquire into and ascertain the nature of the government, of the Constitution under which we live. It is of some consequence, inasmuch as the gentleman from Brook-

field, (Mr. Greene) as I understood him, has advanced the idea that this government is in its nature something like the old government; not monarchical, not aristocratical, to be sure; it is a government of the people, framed by the people, but yet possessing interests adverse to those of the people, having powers which it would naturally exercise for its own purposes, and not according to the wishes of the people. If that be true, then this government is so far like unto the old government, changed in form to be sure; the mode of its institution changed—but still left, as I understand that gentleman to maintain, a government, antagonistic to the rights and interests of the people, distinct from the people. * * * But if, * * *, it be true that this government, constituted by the people, is a government of the people themselves, a government by the exercise of which, the people are undertaking the control of their own affairs, are conducting their own administration; if it is a government, which rightly administered, does have and can have no interests adverse to the interests of the people, because it is a government of the people themselves, capable of being used for beneficial purposes, so far as the agents of the people, who administer it, keep within the line of their duty as prescribed by the people, then we should have just as much of it as we can use for wise and beneficial purposes, without danger of abuse. * * *

“What did the people of Massachusetts undertake to do, when, in 1780, they attempted to make a Constitution? They had asserted their right to govern themselves, and that is just what they undertook to do upon that occasion. They undertook to solve the problem of self-government, to establish a government, not distinct from, and adverse to, the people, but a government of the people themselves, to be administered by and through the people; acting, of course, not in their collective and primary capacity, because that was impossible, but as they could only act, through agents appointed to do their work, their bidding, their will. * * *

GEN. LEWIS CASS concludes one of his addresses by saying: “But here we are—the sun never shone on a country as happy as this * * * where the government is instituted by all, for

the good of all, and protected by all, where there is no oppression—where every man is as free as the air he breathes, and where there is liberty and prosperity offered to every man.”

THOMAS COOPER, in a work entitled “Some Information respecting America,” says: “There is little fault to find with the government of America, either in principle or in practice. * * * The government is the government of the people, and for the people.” (pp. 52 and 53.)

In an address presented to President John Adams, and signed by the principal citizens of Westmoreland County, Virginia, occurs the following sentence: “The Declaration that our People are hostile to a Government made by themselves, for themselves and conducted by themselves, is an insult malignant in its nature, and extensive in its mischief * * * * .”

Robert Toombs’ opening words in an address delivered on December 30, 1850, are suggestive of those of Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg Address of later years. Toombs began with the declaration: “Sixty-three years ago our fathers joined together to form a more perfect Union, and to establish justice * * * * We have now met to put that government on trial * * * * In my opinion, in my judgment the verdict is such as to give hope to the friends of liberty throughout the world * * * * I am proud of every battlefield of the Revolution that reflects honor on my country—it is all my country.”

CHIEF JUSTICE MARSHALL, in *McCulloch v. Maryland*, says: “The government of the Union is emphatically and truly a government of the people. Its powers are granted by them and are to be exercised directly on them and for their benefit.”

PRESIDENT MONROE referred to “a government which is founded by, administered for, and supported by the people.”

LAMARTINE, speaking of Robespierre’s theories, uses the phrase: “This end was the representative sovereignty of all the citizens, concentrated in an election as extensive as the people themselves, and acting by the people and for the people, in an elective council, which should be all the government.”

HENRY WILSON, writing to James Ridpath, used some form of sentence wherein something resembling the words "government of the people, by the people and for the people" occurs.

GEORGE THOMPSON, the English reformer, in a speech in 1851, uses the phrase "government of all, by all, for all."

JAMES DOUGLAS, in "The Advancement of Society in Knowledge and Religion," (Edinburgh, 1830, p. 70), says: "The depressed vassal of the old Continent becomes co-legislator, and co-ruler, in a government where all power is from the people, and in the people, and for the people."

LIEUTENANT M. F. MAURY says: "Unlike Europe, there are no disaffected people in this country for a foe to tamper with. The government is by the people, for the people, and with the people. It is the people." (Report of August, 1851 on the Subject of Fortifications, H. R. Ex Doc. No. 5-32 Congress, 1st Session.)

Even that great genius of pre-Revolutionary times, one of the dominating figures not only in his native Virginia but throughout the colonies and in the councils of the new government—PATRICK HENRY—in his great address against the adoption of the Constitution is reported to have urged "a government of the people, by the people," and that "government is, or ought to be instituted for the common benefit, protection and security of the people"—and "that he was willing on all occasions to bow with the utmost deference to the majesty of the people."

Twenty years earlier one SCHINZ, in Switzerland, is said to have used the words "all the government of Switzerland must acknowledge that they are simply from the people, by the people, and for the people."

In one of the many prefaces to one of the many editions of Wycliffe's translations of the Scriptures, it is said that somewhere—never definitely located—the following declaration appears: "This Bible is for the government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

In conclusion, MARKENS says: "One diligent researcher

brings to light from the days of Pericles an address of Cleon, a tanner by trade, who in 420 B.C. announced to the men of Athens: "I am in favor of the Democracy that shall be democratic, that shall give us the rule, which shall be of the people, by the people, for the people."

The mere arrangement of these quotations in their chronological order shows how unjust is any inference that Lincoln took his sentence at second hand. There is no more reason to suppose that he copied his phrase from Theodore Parker, than there is that Parker copied from Daniel Webster, or Webster his from James Douglas.

His public utterances of a quarter of a century abound with references to the "government of the people," "the ultimate justice of the people," his references to the "plain people," and in his first message to Congress he says in describing the Rebellion in the South: "It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy—a government of the people, by the same people, can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes." "This is essentially a people's contest."

He had no need to draw upon the memory of his early reading to enable him to formulate the closing sentence of the Gettysburg Address. And as to the central idea of his address, the following extemporaneous statement of Lincoln to his Secretary clearly shows that he was constantly thinking of the great idea which underlies his Gettysburg Address.

John Hay referred to Orville H. Browning's suggestion that the North should subjugate the South, exterminate the whites, set up a black republic, and protect the negroes "while they raised our cotton."

"Some of our Northerners seem bewildered and dazzled by the excitement of the hour," Lincoln replied. "Doolittle seems inclined to think that this war is to result in the entire abolition of slavery. Old Colonel Hamilton, a venerable and most respectable gentleman, impresses upon me most earnestly the propriety of enlisting the slaves in our army. For my own part," he said, "I consider the central idea pervading this struggle

is the necessity that is upon us of proving that popular government is not an absurdity. We must settle this question now, whether in a free government the minority have the right to break up the government whenever they choose. If we fail, it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves. There may be one consideration used in stay of such final judgment, but that is not for us to use in advance, and that is, that there exists in our case an instance of a vast and far-reaching disturbing element, which the history of no other free nation will probably ever present. That, however, is not for us to say at present. Taking the government as we found it, we will see if the majority can preserve it."

This statement, spoken offhand to his secretary, reveals the foundation of Lincoln's judgment on the War of the Rebellion: there was at stake something more precious than the preservation of the Union, something more urgent than the abolition of slavery—and that was Democracy itself. Two and a half years later, in his address at Gettysburg, he put into one imperishable sentence the thought of which this was the germ.

In making this collection of extracts from speeches, from letters, of sentences and of phrases, where similar words appear, and which a great many conclude must have been the foundation or source from which the last sentence of the Gettysburg Address was taken or upon which its construction was founded, a new list has been added, sources never referred to up to this moment have been unearthed, and further search would probably disclose many more such similar phrases used by others. How inconceivable the spectacle of Lincoln searching and comparing the complete list of political literature and phraseology for this final phrase! How unlike Lincoln's method of writing or speaking! How impossible, in the short time at his disposal and living in the whirlwind of events in Washington, taking up every available moment of his time, for Lincoln to have had the opportunity for this slow and tiresome research. Aside from preparing his Cooper Institute Address, and he probably took more pains with it than with any other single production, and his First Inaugural, which he did prepare

with considerable care, and for which he used a few volumes and documents from Herndon's library, Lincoln never sat down and prepared any of his important letters or speeches—although he actually wrote out some of them. They just came to him from a fullness of heart and mind saturated with years of study, of contemplation and of mental struggle. The one idea which was ever uppermost in his mind and of which he thought for practically a decade—day and night—the preservation of the Union and the maintenance of the Constitution and the solution of the perplexing slavery problem, he perfected by meditation, by discussion, by public debate, and public speech, so long and so continuously, to the exclusion of practically all else, that he came to know it and understand it better than any other man living. It was the ever-recurring problem which he was constantly engaged in solving and explaining and demonstrating, like a geometrical proposition. He kept on talking about it, and corresponding about it, and investigating it from every standpoint. He demonstrated every phase, every facet of that perplexing theorem. Like the great musician who for hours rings in the underlying idea, or melody, or motif in one form or another, but always resembling the great original underlying melody, or, like the players in the orchestra where the theme introduced by one part is repeated and imitated by the others in succession, so Lincoln carries the demonstration of his theory of government from its beginning to the moment when he rose to dedicate the National Cemetery at Gettysburg.

It was nothing new or novel that he was called upon to say. He had said it, or part of it, in one form or another a score of times. Condense his important speeches, scan his utterances during the Joint Debate with Douglas, compare the epoch-making letters which he wrote to the leaders of the Union party for ten years, and you will see that in one form or another he touched upon the same ever-recurring subject. But at Gettysburg came the hour and the place and the moment, when Lincoln had the opportunity to say for all time what he had been attempting to say for ten years past; and then there are few scenes in our history where the grandeur of the occasion con-

tributed so much to raise human speech to the level of the sublime. So that when he rose, the Union spoke through him, Democracy spoke through him, Liberty spoke through him, a Nation embattled—shaking off the strangle hold of slavery—spoke through him; the soldiers living spoke through him; each soldier dead seemed to have uttered the *apologia pro vita sua* through him, the flag uttered her protest at being hauled down in twelve States through him; enslaved peoples chanted their prayers and hopes through him; the spirits of the dead Fathers and Founders fluttering through the atmosphere, anxious for the life of the Union, pleaded through him; the embattled farmers of Lexington and Saratoga and Trenton and Valley Forge struggled to make themselves heard through him. The victors at Yorktown asked whether they had fought in vain, the soldiers and sailors of the War of 1812 and of 1848, who defended and expanded our domain, demanded to be heard through him. The spirits of the martyrs and victims of persecutions of the millenia were present around and above him, and charged the atmosphere with their spirits, which still lived. He was anxious to be on hand; he wanted no chance of missing the occasion, as he told Stanton in rejecting his proposition to leave on the morning of the dedication: “I do not wish so to go that by the slightest accident we fail entirely.” And so he reached the spot the night before. And through the numerous accounts of how and when and where he wrote and prepared the address—and no two accounts agree—no two saw or heard the same thing, only one thing is clear and undisputed—that Lincoln spoke substantially what the eight drafts of the Address, slightly differing in punctuation and as to a word here or there, report him to have said. He did not fall in with the orator of the occasion, although he had access to the printed speech of Everett’s days before the event, and probably read the lengthy address. He did not follow the beaten path of eulogy for the dead, of which a perfect avalanche of classic forms and specimens was available. He uttered in pure and simple style the principle upon which the government was based and founded, and upon which it could endure, and our everlast-

ing debt to those who fought for the Union that it might endure in the form in which it was handed down to us by the Founders. "I would not care a fig to wear any King's crown," says Theodore Tilton, in re-reading this short address, "or to sit in any President's chair, but oh, would that the Good Fairies had given me as my birth-gift this noble writer's pen." Though President Lincoln's Cabinet was one of the ablest that ever sat in the White House, yet I do not believe that any one of them could have written the famous brief speech wherein this quaint and simple, yet mighty master of words, made three small prepositions do the whole work of explaining his proposed policy for the reconstruction of the shattered Republic, to wit: "That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government *of* the people, *by* the people, and *for* the people, shall not perish from the earth!"

And so it came to pass that on that afternoon in November, on that sainted battlefield, hallowed by the blood of the tens of thousands who fell that the Union might live, God's anointed messenger, who was commissioned by Him on High to lead his people through the Valley of the Shadow, was bidden to appear on that battlefield, and his lips touched by the fire from the altar upon which was sprinkled the blood of the best of the youth of the land, spoke the message of the Union to those living, and bade them consecrate and dedicate themselves to conclude the task undertaken by those who had fallen, in order that they shall not have died in vain—and thus spoke Abraham Lincoln on the battlefield of Gettysburg, and no one had ever spoken similar words before him or after him. He stands alone, as he stood at Gettysburg. "His Gettysburg Speech is the world's model in eloquence, elegance and condensation." It is an utterance of enduring splendor.

These men who were supposed to have inspired part or all of the address, were all groping for words to formulate the idea which was knocking at the gate of their inner consciousness. They were attempting to utter what they felt, so that others might understand what they were attempting to solve—the riddle of government where all men should be equal—as

nearly equal as possible—they failed, or rather they succeeded in part; but it is not given to all to formulate the wording of an eternal formula; some approximate, some confuse, some utter a half truth, but Lincoln alone gave the thought, clear as crystal in his mind, the winged words which will make them outlast the numerous bronzes upon which they are engraved. “Lincoln’s great soul was the Peak of Teneriffe, which caught like a sunburst the lofty tops of human thought while contemporary statesmen groped in the darkness of the valleys below.” It was left to Lincoln to clothe it in the responsive language of the many, and then it became crystallized and found its permanent place in literature. Others we see have labored with the same sentiment, but it was left for Lincoln to mould it into its final shape to give utterance to the classic formula of Republican form of government, and it has become a vast addition to the moral capital of the Nation. He gave it utterance, he gave it form, he gave it life, such as others were incapable of supplying; every word was appropriate, none could be omitted and none added and none changed—there were evidently no Lincolns among them. They began, they struggled, they labored, but could not voice their message to eternity. “Most men never truly feel the weight of life, or else flatten under the load. Some achieve the useful hardness of coal, while a few, a very few, under terrible pressure bring forth the brilliant and immortal diamonds of the soul.”

Lincoln never copied, never plagiarized, never quoted anyone or anything, but when he did quote, as in the case of the classic quotation from Henry Clay, then there was no doubt as to whether Lincoln spoke or whether the author from whom he quoted spoke. He was original, he was the first, and as he had no ancestors in style or in speech, he had no prototypes whom he could follow. He led, he was born to lead, and leading, spoke, as no one did before him. How ludicrous the very suggestion that Lincoln went to others to clarify or simplify any of his statements, least of all the most important pronouncement of his life. Read some of his other immortal productions and tell us, who inspired the Ellsworth letter or the Bixby

letter or the letter to Dr. Canisius or to Gen. Hooker or to Greeley or to Conklin, which was read to the Illinois Convention, or to the Methodist Conference—were they copied in part or in whole? Who inspired the passionate outbursts at Bloomington and the final paragraph at Cooper Union, or by whom were either of these suggested? Surely, he who was in the habit of quoting or plagiarizing did not choose the cemetery at Gettysburg for the first attempt.

“At the sea-shore you pick up a pebble, fashioned after a law of nature, in the exact form that best resists pressure, and worn as smooth as glass. It is so perfect that you take it as a keepsake. But could you know its history from the time when a rough fragment of rock fell from the overhanging cliff into the sea, to be taken possession of by the undercurrents, and dragged from one ocean to another, perhaps around the world, for a hundred years, until in reduced and perfect form it was cast upon the beach as you find it, you would have a fit illustration of what many principles, now in familiar use, have endured, thus tried, tortured and fashioned during the ages.”

And thus was this nugget of precious words evolved and moulded and finally uttered by Abraham Lincoln on the battlefield of Gettysburg.

No, the Gettysburg Address is all of Lincoln's own making. It is but a recurrence of the idea that here was a man who could express more concisely, more clearly, more inevitably, the cause of the ailment he referred to in his ‘House Divided’ speech. No other man has epitomized the situation in 1858 and in 1860 more clearly than did this same man. No one could have written the First Inaugural combining both the power of a challenge and a plea for harmony. No other man knew how to phrase the meaning of the Cemetery at Gettysburg as did Abraham Lincoln. And finally, among the many illustrious men of his day, no other human being could have uttered the Second Inaugural—it was Lincoln's valedictory to his people and to his life—spoken by the great valedictorian of his generation.

Many a contemporary has attempted to analyze and explain

both these remarkable utterances, dwell upon his preparation and how he gathered his memoranda for the Gettysburg Address. Some agree, others differ, as to just what he did say and just what he wrote and what memoranda he made for that imperishable utterance, but it seemed to have occurred to not one of these that Lincoln needed no preparation for either event. Lincoln's entire life was a preparation for the double climax in the last two years of his life. Just as he spoke the 'House Divided' sentiment and amazed an entire continent by that marvelous summary of the situation at that time, so he prepared all the years of his life those two great utterances which were as inevitable when they were delivered as were the other great pronouncements in the history of mankind.

New standards, new appraisals prevail here, and unless we take cognizance of them we are unable to account for Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg or at the Second Inaugural. The ordinary human standards may not and cannot be applied to him on either of these occasions. He himself was hardly conscious of what he had accomplished; his hearers certainly were not, for he expressed the fear that he had not done justice to the task.

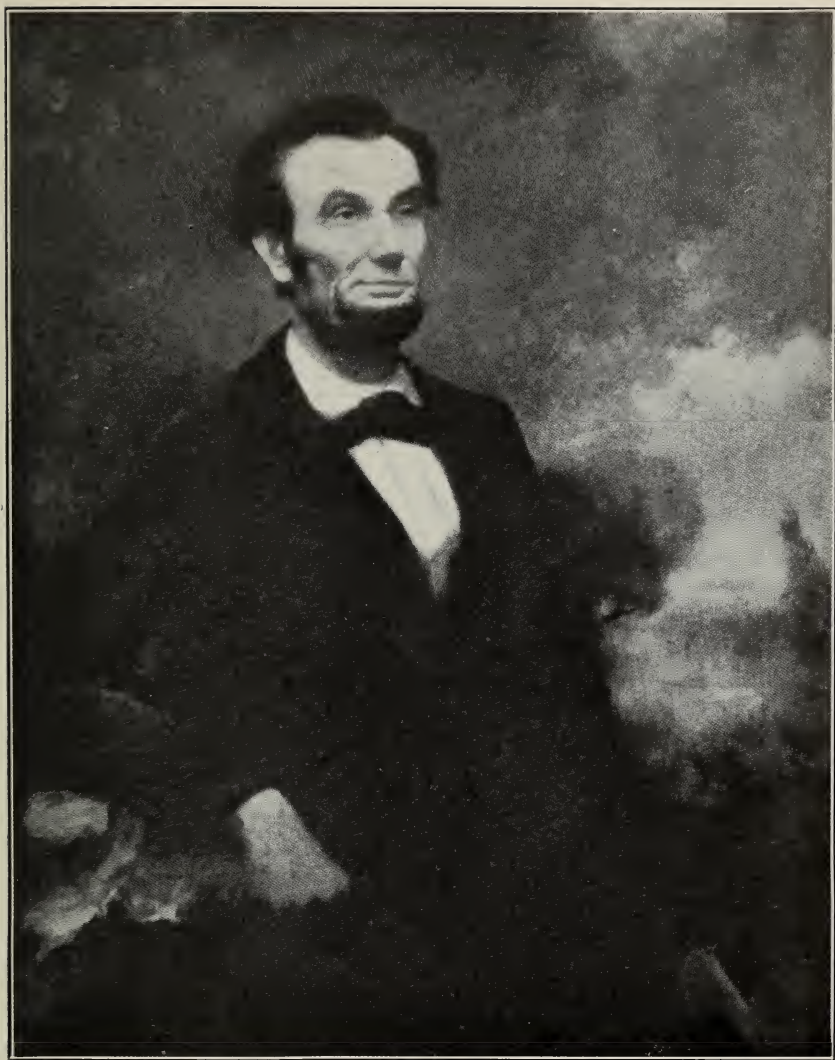
It was only after two days had elapsed, and the printed reports in newspapers following the event had appeared that this tribute to sublime service to country by heroic souls was discovered. Here we beheld the perfection of English composition in the celestial spirit of winged words. It was thus that the oration of the occasion by the chosen orator of the celebration was submerged in the grandeur of the Lincoln apostrophe.

But the spoken word at Gettysburg was soon recognized far and wide as the message of America, through the one man who epitomized America better than any other, and who rightfully became the First American!

God chooses men from common callings and without a formal training in the schools, to sway great masses of mankind. The shepherd, the plowman, the peasant, the cobbler, the fisherman, the sailor, the blacksmith, the tanner, the tailor, the railsplitter—are the favorite earthly occupations from which

He recruits his messengers. When God wants a vessel He knows how to shape it and use it, though it may not have felt the moulding hands of the master potter of this world. Here, when it came to saving the last hope, the last remnant of the government of the people, He, in His wisdom

“took the dried clay of common road,
Clay warm yet with the genial heat of Earth,
Dashed through it all a strain of prophecy;
Tempered the heap with touch of mortal tears,
Then mixed a laughter with the serious stuff.
The colour of the ground was in him, the red earth,
The tang and odour of the primal things—
The rectitude and patience of the rocks;
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;
The justice of the rain that loves all leaves;
The pity of the snow that hides all scars;
The loving-kindness of the wayside well;
The tolerance and equity of light
That gives as freely to the shrinking weed
As to the great oak flaring to the wind—
To the grave’s low hill as to the Matterhorn
That shoulders out the sky.”



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

From the Painting by Douglas Volk

This picture, declared to be a "most excellent likeness" of the Great Emancipator, is the last of seven canvases of the same subject done by this artist. It attracted much attention at the 1929 winter exhibition of the National Academy, New York.

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